

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-12 PC-01 AID-05
/122 W

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P 091440Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7586
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
USMISSION USNATO
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
USINT HAVANA
USINT BAGHDAD
COMIDEASTFOR
CINCPAC
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ADDIS ABABA 1109

E.O. 11652: GDS
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TAGS: MOPS, PBOR, CU, ET, SO
SUBJ: ETHIOPIAN FORCES PRESS ADVANTAGE INTO MIDDLE OGADEN

REF: ADDIS ABABA 1025

SUMMARY AND COMMENT: ETHIOPIAN NATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY OPERA-
TIONS COMMAND (NROC) ANNOUNCED RECAPTURE OF TWO STRATEGIC

TOWNS IN MIDDLE OGADEN MARCH 8. APPARENT SPEED WITH WHICH ETHIOPIAN FORCES ARE ADVANCING ON SOMALI-HELD POSITIONS INDICATES THERE IS LITTLE OR NO RESISTANCE AND THAT POSSIBLE COLLAPSE OF REGULAR SOMALI FORCES STILL WITHIN ETHIOPIA IS WELL UNDERWAY. THERE IS SOME EXPECTATION THAT ADDIS ABABA-DIRE DAWA PORTION OF RAILWAY WILL BE FULLY OPERATIONAL BY MARCH 11-12. REPORTS OF EXCELLENT MILITIA PERFORMANCE DURING CURRENT OFFENSIVE CONTINUE TO OVERSHADOW ACHIEVEMENTS OF REGULAR FORCES AND MAY ALSO REFLECT ETHIOPIAN EFFORTS TO TRANSFORM CHARACTER OF MILITARY. MORALE OF CIVILIANS IS UNDERSTANDABLY HIGH, BUT MAY ONLY BE MOMENTARY GIVEN CONTINUING INTERNAL SECURITY AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AFFECTING URBAN AREAS. FROM REPORTED DEPLOYMENTS OF ETHIOPIAN FORCES IN OGADEN AND DEGREE OF SUCCESS IN CRUSHING SOMALI PERSONNEL AND EQUIPMENT WITHIN ETHIOPIA, IT DOES NOT NOW APPEAR THAT COMBINED ETHIOPIAN/CUBAN FORCES WILL TRANSGRESS SOMALIA'S FRONTIERS, EVEN THOUGH THERE ARE ELEMENTS WITHIN MILITARY WHO CONTINUE TO ADVOCATE CAPTURING HARGEISA. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

1. ETHIOPIAN MEDIA REPORTED ANNOUNCEMENT BY NROC THAT ETHIOPIAN FORCES HAD RECAPTURED OGADEN TOWNS OF FIK AND DEGAHABUR DURING DAY OF MARCH 8. FIK IS LOCATED 126 KMS DUE SOUTH OF BABILE ALONG EXTREMELY ROUGH TRAIL. DEGAHABUR IS 171 KMS SSE OF JIJIGA ON REASONABLY GOOD DIRT ROAD WHICH LEADS TO OTHER STRATEGIC OGADEN TOWNS OF KEBRE DEHAR AND GODE. CONFIDENTIAL

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ANOTHER PREVIOUSLY IMPORTANT MILITARY OUTPOST IS LOCATED AT AWARE, 76 KMS DUE EAST OF DEGAHABUR AND COULD BE ONE OF ETHIOPIA'S NEXT OBJECTIVES. DISTANCES COVERED FROM BABILE AND JIJAGA BY SIGNIFICANT ETHIOPIAN CONTIGENTS SINCE MARCH 5 CAPTURE OF JIJIGA AND KARA MARDA PASS, WOULD SEEM TO INDICATE SOMALI FORCES ARE RETREATING HASTILY.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ADDIS ABABA 1109

2. HARARGHE PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATOR, COMMANDER LEMMA

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GUETEMA, WAS CALLED TO ADDIS SAME DAY JIJIGA WAS RE-CAPTURED. (HARARGHE PROVINCE ENCOMPASSES OGADEN REGION.) DURING 24-HOUR UNPUBLICIZED VISIT TO ADDIS, HE BRIEFED SOME KEBELE (NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION) CHAIRMEN ON PROGRESS OF WAR EFFORT IN OGADEN, GIVING HIGH PRAISE TO MILITIA. HE REPORTEDLY SAID IT WAS NORTHERNERS, I.E. AMHARAS AND TIGRES, AMONG MILITIA WHO WERE MOST COURAGEOUS FIGHTERS AND MAINLY RESPONSIBLE FOR MILITA'S SUCCESSES. HE BELIEVED RAILROAD WOULD SOON BE OPEN BETWEEN ADDIS AND DIRE DAWA, PERAPS AS EARLY AS MARCH 12. (ETHIOPIAN HERALD REPORTED THAT ON MARCH 5 RAILROAD WAS OPENED AS FAR AS ERER, APPROX. 60 KMS. WEST OF DIRE DAWA.)

3. DURING DISCUSSION FOLLOWING RECAPTURE OF JIJIGA,

FRENCH MILATT STATED THAT HE BELIEVED ETHIOPIAN TROOP STRENGTH NOW UP TO TEN AND POSSIBLY ELEVEN DIVISIONS. NEW DIVISIONS HAVE BEEN CREATED FROM MILITIA AND THERE IS FURTHER EFFORT TO REPLACE 3RD DIVISION REGULARS WITH MILITIA AS FORMER BECOME BATTLE CASUALTIES. MILATT BELIEVED THAT ETHIOPIANS PLAN EVENTUALLY TO PHASE OUT MAJORITY OF REGULAR TROOPS, WHO ARE NOT CONSIDERED IDEOLOGICALLY COMPATIBLE WITH REVOLUTION AND WHO ALSO REPRESENT POTENTIAL THREAT TO DIRG AUTHORITY. MILATT WAS SURPRISED TRANSFORMATION WAS OCCURRING NOW WHILE OGADEN CONFLICT CONTINUING.

4. VICTORIES IN OGADEN ARE BEING WELCOMED BY MOST ETHIOPIANS, EVEN THOSE ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY DIRG POLICIES IN PAST. THERE IS HOPE AMONG CIVILIANS THAT ONCE WAR SITUATION IS RESOLVED, PRESENT CONDITIONS WILL IMPROVE. ESPECIALLY TROUBLING AT MOMENT ARE SEVERE GRAIN SHORTAGE IN ADDIS, ATTRIBUTED TO INADEQUATE TRANSPORTA-
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TION CAPACITY AND NOT THIS YEAR'S HARVEST, AND CONTINUING RED TERROR CAMPAIGN. WHILE IT IS REASONABLE TO EXPECT GRAIN SITUATION WILL IMPROVE DRAMATICALLY WHEN MILITARY TRANSPORT IS MADE AVAILABLE FOR CIVILIAN USES, IT IS NOT AT ALL CLEAR THAT INTERNAL SECURITY WILL IMPROVE IMMEDIATELY.
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